

Mutual Broadcasting System

Fulton Lewis, Jr., at 7:00 P.M.

"The Senate Internal Security Subcommittee today heard a first-hand account of a disturbing story -- still with a considerable question mark at the end of it -- story about five Russian sailors who have taken voluntary refuge in the United States since their cargo ship was interned in Formosa in 1954, who were spirited under threat by Russian officials in the United States, through Idlewild National Airport outside of New York City several weeks ago, and while U.S. officials looked on with full cognizance of what was happening, they were herded into a trans-Atlantic commercial transport plane and sent back to Russia.

"The witness is a 20-year-old husky blond boy who testified through a committee-hired translator and he was a sixth in the group of refugee sailors who had been living in New York under the auspices of a church organization there. He gave his name as Victor Soleyev, that is spelled S-O-L-E-V-Y-E-V, and he told the committee that he and the other five refugees were living contentedly, most of them with jobs in New York City, when on April 6 he heard a knock on his hotel room door, opened to find several men.

"He said he thought at first they were FBI agents, but he found out quickly that they were not, that they were Russian government agents and their mission was to invite him to come to the apartment of the Russian delegate to the United Nations, Archides A. Sobelev (?), who, they said, wanted to talk to the sailor. They told him that several of the other sailors in the group had accepted the invitation and that they were conferring with Sobelev that afternoon.

"The young sailor refused to go, said that he intended to remain in the United States. The agents then mentioned his mother, he said, and showed pictures of his mother, his sister and his sweetheart. He said the inference to their conversation was that all would suffer if he refused to return to Russia. The witness said that the Russian agents even produced a letter which was written in what appeared to be his mother's handwriting, and was signed by her, which mentioned possible reprisals against the mother and other members of the family if he failed to come home, and appealed to him to do so.

"He told the committee that the letter obviously was dictated to his mother or was a counterfeit because, he said, his mother only had one year of formal education in her lifetime and she spoke and wrote in the very simplest of language, which was all she knew. Many of the words and phrases in the letter, he said, would have been completely foreign to her, if not actually incoherent.

"He said that later that night he saw the other members of the group. They said that they had been pressurized by the Russian officials, but had definitely decided to remain in the United States rather than go back to prison, or worse, in Russia. Once, he said -- one, he said, told him that he had no illusions about what would happen if they did return and he wanted no part of it.

"The witness said that he himself told the agents who visited him that he loved his mother, he wanted to cause her no harm -- that he admired and liked his fellow Russian citizens back home perhaps more than he did the people of the United States, but that he was quite well aware of his own status so far as the Soviet Union was concerned. That status was that of a traitor and a political criminal. He said that while he might have been used briefly for propaganda purposes once he returned to Moscow, when his usefulness was over, he would have been caused to disappear. Those are quotes, and it is indeed polite terminology.

"The story telling duty shifted then to one James Van Hughenstaat (?), an official of the Church World Service, which had been looking after the boys since they defected and had been finding jobs for them in New York and taking care of them there. He said he first learned that some of the sailors-- this is Van Hughenstaat now--first learned that some of the sailors might return to Russia on the afternoon of April 6, the afternoon when the first witness was called upon, that he immediately notified an agent of the United States government a government agency that was interested in the case, which he said instructed him not to identify them.

"All indications are that the agency was the CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY headed by Mr. Allen Dulles, the brother of John Foster Dulles, because that is the agency that has jurisdiction over cases of this kind, and their technique in handling is typical. Mr. Van Hughenstaat said that he was told by officials of the agency that they were aware that something was cooking, and it was suggested that he go to Idlewild International Airport to be present when the sailors left. He said the agency called later, warned him not to tell anyone about his information, and said that it would be unnecessary for him to go to the airport now because, uh, for their own reasons, but he went anyway.

"At Idlewild he said he saw the five young sailors surrounded by a large group of Soviet Russian representatives. He said he could not say exactly how many, but that he personally counted at least 19, and they appeared to be under the direction, he said, of a man he had seen but could not identify, had seen in immigration classes at New York University in New York City on several occasions.

"The Russian sailors, he said, avoided his, Van Hughenstaats's glance, appeared not to want to be seen by him, were taken to the U. S. Immigration Service offices for brief hearings and were rushed away, he said, surrounded by these Russian agents, and herded into a waiting commercial airliner. He said he attempted to follow them, but was barred from doing so by two bulky and powerful Russian agents. He said he felt that various American agents were spotted through the airport at the time all this was going on, and when he went to the observation platform on top of the airport building to watch the take-off, two Soviet agents were still at his side. Done in America, if you please, and those--the doings of the new Russian look in government.

"The question mark still is what of this government agency, and why did it stand by without protecting the young sailors and without advising them of their rights? If this is the CIA, and there is every reason to believe that it is, why did they connive with the Russian agents, or at least refrain from interfering?

"Senator Herman Welker of Idaho, after hearing the evidence, said it was very evident to him that the five sailors wanted to remain in the United States but were intimidated into returning to Russia by threats and warnings, and he said he intends to go into the matter further until all of the facts are exhausted.

"One question for the Port of New York Authority, which controls Idlewild, why did they allow gangs of 19 Soviet agents to have the run of the airport terminal and airfield, blocking American citizens, or others, for that matter, from going where they wish and doing their duty guarding spectators on the observation platform, or did the CIA give no-interference instructions to the airport police also?"